

Message Text

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ACTION SCCT-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-09 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SY-04 USSS-00 FBIE-00 AID-05 EB-07

DOT-00 FAA-00 CAB-02 JUSE-00 COME-00 SCA-01 TRSE-00

IO-10 /096 W

----- 047228

P R 250710Z JAN 75

FM USINT BAGHDAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1570

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0070

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS IZ

SUBJ: TERRORIST INCIDENT AT ORLY

REF: STATE 13072

1. FOLLOWING IS PROVIDED IN RESPONSE TO REFTEL AND IS
ALMOST ENTIRELY BASED ON ACCOUNT GIVEN ME JAN 24 BY
FRENCH AMB PIERRE CERLES:

2. SHORTLY AFTER PLANE LEFT ORLY JAN 20 FRENCH EMBASSY IN
BAGHDAD RECEIVED CIRCULAR CABLE FROM PARIS STATING THAT
PERMISSION TO LAND SHOULD BE REQUESTED IN EVENT A/C ARRIVED
THEIR COUNTRY. CERLES CALLED UNDER SEC HADITHI
TO MFA TO REQ PERMISSION. WORD CAME BACK THAT ALTHOUGH
GOI WAS VERY DISTURBED BY REQ, DID NOT WISH TO PERMIT
LANDING, AND IT WAS AGAINST GOI POLICY, IT WOULD DO SO FOR
GOF AS SPECIAL FAVOR. (CERLES ASSUMES AUTHORIZATION CAME
FROM RCC VICE CHAIRMAN SADDAM HUSSEIN, KEY MAN IN GOI.)
CERLES WAS AT AIRPORT IN AFTERNOON WHEN A/C LANDED. ALSO
PRESENT WERE MULTITUDE OF GOI POLICE AND SECURITY OFFICIALS
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LED BY SADOUN SHAKER, CHIEF OF IRAQI INTELLIGENCE AND

SECURITY. CERLES HAD NEVER MET HIM AND WAS NOT INTRODUCED.

3. CERLES TOLD ME IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE THAT, AFTER PLANE HAD LANDED, AUTHORITIES TOLD HIM THAT DECISIONS ON HOW TO PROCEED WERE HIS SINCE PLANE HAD BEEN GRANTED PERMISSION TO LAND AT GOF REQ. HE DECIDED TO BOARD THE A/C TO EVALUATE SITUATION. ON BOARD WAS CHIEF PILOT OF AIR FRANCE, ASST CHIEF PILOT AND ONE OTHER CREW MEMBER. ONE OF CREW WAS CHOSEN BECAUSE HE SPOKE ARABIC, BUT THIS WAS NOT KNOWN TO TERRORISTS. OF THREE TERRORISTS, TWO HAD ON STOCKING MASKS, ONE OF WHOM WAS WOUNDED IN HAND AND VERY WEAK. BOTH HELD MACHINE GUNS ON PILOT AND AMBASSADOR AS THEY DISCUSSED SITUATION. THIRD WAS UNMASKED, SPOKE IMPECCABLE FRENCH. AMBASSADOR PLACED THEM ALL IN 20'S ALTHOUGH DIFFICULT TO SEE MASKED FACES. HE BELIEVED FRENCH SPEAKING LEADER TO BE INTELLECTUAL, PROBABLY FROM SYRIAN-LEBANESE BORDER AREA AND APPARENTLY EDUCATED BY CATHOLIC BROTHERS. HE SPOKE OF GOING TO MASS DAILY. CREW BELIEVED OTHERS WERE PALESTINIAN AND ALGERIAN.

4. FOLLOWING DISCUSSION WITH CHIEF PILOT, AMB FELT THERE WERE THREE OPTIONS: ONE PREFERRED BY TERRORISTS WAS TO SPEND NIGHT AT AIRPORT AND PROCEED NEXT MORNING TO DISTINATION, ALLEGEDLY JIDDA; SECOND WAS TO OVERCOME HIJACKERS WITH FOCE (REJECTED IMMEDIATELY AS TOO DANGEROUS BECAUSE OF NERVOUS CONDITION OF TERRORISTS AND THEIR MANY ARMS); AND THIRD, PERMIT IMMEDIATE REFUELING OF PLANE. HE CHOSE THIRD AND IRAQI AUTHORITIES AGREED. CERLES REBOARDED PLANE, MUCH TO AMAZEMENT OF IRAQIS AND CREW, AND INFORMED PILOT OF DECISION. PLANE WAS REFUELED AND TOOK OFF SHORTLY BEFORE MIDNIGHT. IMMEDIATELY, IRAQI AUTHORITIES ORDERED AIRPORT SHUT DOWN COMPLETELY AND PROHIBITED ANY A/C TO LAND THAT NIGHT. CERLES WENT HOME TO BED AFTER GIVING ORDERS TO HIS STAFF TO BE ALERT FOR POSSIBLE RETURN OF A/C.

5. BASED ON COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM CREW AFTER DEBRIEFING, A/C WENT FIRST TO JIDDA WHERE WORD CAME THAT A/C SHOULD IMMEDIATELY DEPART FROM SAUDI AIR SPACE. NEXT IT WENT TO LUXOR WHERE APPARENTLY TERRORISTS DECIDED THEY WANTED TO GO TO ADEN (NOT CLEAR TO ME WHETHER PERMISSION TO LAND LUXOR

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WAS ACTUALLY REQUESTED). AFTER CONVERSATION IN ARABIC WITH ONE OF TERRORISTS, ADEN AIRPORT GRANTED PERMISSION TO LAND, BUT WHEN DESCENT BEGAN TOWER ASKED IF THERE WERE FEDAYIN ABOARD. AFTER RECEIVING AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE, ADEN IMMEDIATELY WITHDREW PERMISSION AND SHUT OFF ALL RUNWAY LIGHTS. PLANE RETURNED TO BAGHDAD AND AMB ALERTED ABOUT 2:00 A.M, PRESUMABLY THROUGH PARIS SINCE A/C WAS IN RADIO CONTACT WITH PARIS. IT TOOK CERLES UNTIL AFTER

3:00 A M TO MAKE CONTACT WITH GOI OFFICIALS AND FINALLY OBTAIN REOPENING OF AIRPORT. HE THEN RUSHED TO AIRPORT BUT ARRIVED ABOUT FIVE MINUTES AFTER LANDING. TERRORISTS WERE ALREADY BEING ESCORTED FROM A/C BY HEAVILY ARMED IRAQIS. THEY APPEARED TO BE COMPLETELY WORN OUT, PARTICULARLY THE ONE WOUNDED IN HAND. CERLES ENTERED PLANE, TALKED WITH CREW AND WITH PARIS BY RADIO.. HE DID NOT SEE TERRORISTS AGAIN.

6. CERLES RETURNED TO TERMINAL AND WAS SHOWN ARMS TERRORISTS HAD; ONE SMALL BAZOOKA TYPE WEAPON OF RUSSIAN ORIGIN WITH SIX ROUNDS OF AMMO; TWO MACHINE GUNS ALSO OF RUSSIAN ORIGIN; GRENADES, THREE 765 CALIBER REVOLVERS, AND CONSIDERABLE QUANTITY OF PLASTIC EXPLOSIVE.

7. ON JAN 21 CERLES WAS CALLED IN BY ACTING MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HADITHI WHO ASKED THAT FRENCH GOVT MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENT ABOUT GOF REQ AND THANKING GOI FOR GRANTING PERMISSION FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS. QUI RELEASED STATEMENT AND IT PUBLISHED HERE JAN 25. CERLES DOES NOT KNOW DISPOSITION OF TERRORISTS OR WHAT IRAQIS ARE GOING TO DO WITH THEM. HE IS CONVINCED, HOWEVER, THAT GOI EXTREMELY DISPLEASED BY WHOLE AFFAIR NOT ONLY BECAUSE LANDING IMPLIED IRAQI COMPLICITY, BUT BECAUSE OF DILEMMA OF WHAT TO DO WITH THREE TERRORISTS.

8. IN ADDITION TO INA STATEMENT DISAPPROVING OF OPERATION (REPORTED BAGHDAD 60) POLITICAL COMMITTEE OF PALESTINE REVOLUTION IN IRAQ DENOUNCED "HIJACKING" AND ISSUED STATEMENT JAN 22 SAYING THAT IT HAD NO RELATION WHATSOEVER WITH THIS OPERATION.

9. COMMENT: BEST EVIDENCE OF IRAQI DISPLEASURE AND DILEMMA
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WAS TURNING OVER OF DECISION-MAKING POWER TO FRENCH AMB. FOR AN AUTHORITARIAN REGIME, IT IS SURELY AN UNPRECEDENTED STEP. THIS ASPECT SHOULD BE VERY CLOSELY HELD AT REQ OF AMB CERLES.
LOWRIE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LANDING RIGHTS, AIRCRAFT HIJACKING, TERRORISTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BAGHDA00070
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750029-0329
From: BAGHDAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750120/aaaaarwq.tel
Line Count: 158
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SCCT
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 STATE 13072
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 MAY 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <20 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TERRORIST INCIDENT AT ORLY
TAGS: PINS, IZ
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006